

THE FIELD POLL

THE INDEPENDENT AND NON-PARTISAN SURVEY
OF PUBLIC OPINION ESTABLISHED IN 1947 AS
THE CALIFORNIA POLL BY MERVIN FIELD

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INCREASING CONCERN AMONG CALIFORNIA VOTERS ABOUT CHILDHOOD OBESITY. SUPPORT FOR POLICIES AIMED AT ENCOURAGING GREATER PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AND HEALTHIER EATING AMONG CHILDREN.

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By Mark DiCamillo and Mervin Field

More California voters now consider obesity to be a very serious problem among the state's kids. At present nearly six in ten (59%) say this, up from 46% who felt this way eight years ago when this question was last posed by *The Field Poll*. Another 33% now describe the problem as somewhat serious and just 7% think it is not a serious problem.

California voters cite unhealthy eating habits as the single greatest health risk to the state's kids. Nearly one in three (31%) now cite unhealthy eating habits as the single greatest health risk facing the state's children, up from 25% who said this in 2007 and 23% in 2003. Another 15% cite a second childhood obesity-related matter, a lack of physical activity among kids, in this setting. Significant proportions also volunteer illegal drug use (17%) and violence (13%) as the greatest health risk facing California kids.

Nearly all segments of the voting population now view childhood obesity as a very serious problem in the state, with African-Americans, Latinos and low-income voters particularly concerned.

These results come from a recent *Field Poll* assessing Californians' views about the threat of childhood obesity conducted about children's health. The survey, funded by The California Endowment, was conducted among 1,005 California voters in late 2010 and is being released today on the first anniversary of First Lady Michele Obama's launching of her childhood obesity prevention initiative.

"Voters are saying that all California families deserve access to healthy, affordable foods and opportunities for physical activity, and they're 100% right," said Robert K. Ross, M.D., president and CEO of the California Endowment. "They recognize the seriousness of the childhood obesity epidemic and understand that changing public policies is the key to creating healthier communities."

Most voters in the survey (60%) believe California kids today are less physically active than they were five years ago. In addition, nearly half (47%) maintain that the average child is eating foods that are less healthy than they were five years ago. African-Americans and Latino voters are more likely than other voters to feel this way.

Greater than three in four (76%) think it is important for businesses and government to make changes so it is easier for people to be healthier. In addition, by a five to four margin (48% to 38%), California voters believe that childhood obesity prevention would be more effective when addressed by the entire community, including health care providers and community groups, than by children and their families individually.

Reaction to policy proposals

There is overwhelming support in this state for a number of policy proposals aimed at making it easier for kids to be more physically active. For example, 89% support requiring physical education classes for four years in high school. A similar percentage (88%) favors requiring school gyms, tracks, playgrounds and fields to be open to children when school is not in session. The proportion backing the idea of cities making street improvements so that it is easier to bike, ride and walk also includes 87%.

Majorities of California voters also support changing school policies as a way to reduce unhealthy eating among kids: Sixty-eight percent of voters support enforcing laws that ban the sale of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks in the schools, 64% favor banning all advertising of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks in schools, and 61% endorse the idea of banning within the schools the sale of all drinks with added sugars.

The survey also finds two in three (64%) support providing government help to encourage more supermarkets to locate in low-income neighborhoods. A majority (56%) also favors establishing a special tax on the sale of soda and soft drinks with the moneys to be used to fight childhood obesity.

Statewide results compared to opinions of residents in six low-income communities

The California Endowment has also recently funded surveys in six low-income communities across the state that the foundation has targeted in public outreach efforts to reduce childhood obesity. To provide comparisons, *The Field Poll* included a number of questions contained in these community surveys.

A comparison of the two sets of surveys underscores the particular challenges faced by parents living in low income communities in dealing with childhood obesity. For example, while 61% of the statewide voting public says it is very easy to find places in their community that sell fresh fruit and vegetables, just 19% of parents in the six targeted low-income communities report this. Similarly, while a majority of Californians statewide (56%) rate their own neighborhood as an excellent or good place for kids to be healthy, in the targeted communities just one in three parents (33%) say this.

Parents in the targeted communities are also much more likely than voters statewide to believe it is very important for businesses and government to make changes so that it is easier for people to be healthier. In addition, they give stronger support to each of eight policy proposals aimed at promoting healthier eating and preventing obesity among young people.

Notice to Editors: The attached graphics provide a more detailed summary of the findings obtained from the statewide Field Poll. A top-line summary, also appended, displays the results of all questions asked in the statewide survey and compares them to the results of a survey of parents in the six targeted communities, conducted by Field Research Corporation for The California Endowment and its agency, Samuels & Associates of Oakland, California, in June 2010 among 820 parents of children living in Baldwin Park, South Los Angeles, the San Antonio neighborhood of Oakland, Santa Ana, West Chula Vista and South Shasta County.

About The California Endowment

The California Endowment, a private, statewide health foundation, was established in 1996 to expand access to affordable, quality health care for underserved individuals and communities and to promote fundamental improvements in the health status of all Californians. For more information, please visit www.calendow.org.

Information About the Survey

Methodological Details

The findings in this report are based on a *Field Poll* survey completed among a statewide sample of 1,005 registered voters living in California. Interviewing was conducted by telephone October 14-26, 2010 using live interviewers in English and Spanish.

Up to eight attempts were made to reach, screen and interview each randomly selected voter in each survey wave. The statewide sample was drawn from a list of all registered voters in California with telephones. Interviewing was completed on either a voter's landline phone or a cell phone depending on the source of the telephone listing from the voter file. The statewide sample was weighted to *Field Poll* estimates of the characteristics of the registered voters in California by region, age, gender, race/ethnicity and party registration.

Sampling error estimates applicable to the results of any probability-based survey depend on sample size as well as the percentage distribution being examined. The maximum sampling error estimates for results based on the overall likely voters sample is +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level. The maximum sampling error is based on results in the middle of the sampling distribution (i.e., percentages at or near 50%). Percentages at either end of the distribution (those closer to 10% or 90%) have a smaller margin of error. Findings from subgroups of the overall sample have somewhat larger sampling error levels. There are other potential sources of error in surveys besides sampling error. However, the overall design and execution of the survey sought to minimize these other sources of error.

The Field Poll was established in 1947 by Mervin Field, who is still an active advisor. The *Poll* has operated continuously as an independent, non-partisan statewide public opinion news service. Funding comes from media subscribers of *The Field Poll*, from several California foundations, and from the University of California and California State University systems, who receive the raw data files from each *Field Poll* survey after its completion for teaching and secondary research purposes.

Questions Asked

See top-line summary attached.

**Chart Pack Summarizing the Findings from the
Field-TCE Childhood Obesity
Prevention Survey**

Conducted for
The California Endowment

by
The Field Poll

About The Survey

- Population surveyed: California registered voters
- Interviews conducted: Live telephone interviews with 1,005 voters in English and Spanish
- Interviewing period: October 14-26, 2010
- Auspices: Conducted by Field Research Corporation on behalf of The California Endowment
- Sampling methods: Voters sampled randomly from a list of all California registered voters
- Sampling error estimates: The statewide findings have a maximum sampling error of +/- 3.2 percentage points at the 95% confidence level

Table 1a

**What is the greatest health risk facing California kids today
– 2010 vs. prior years**

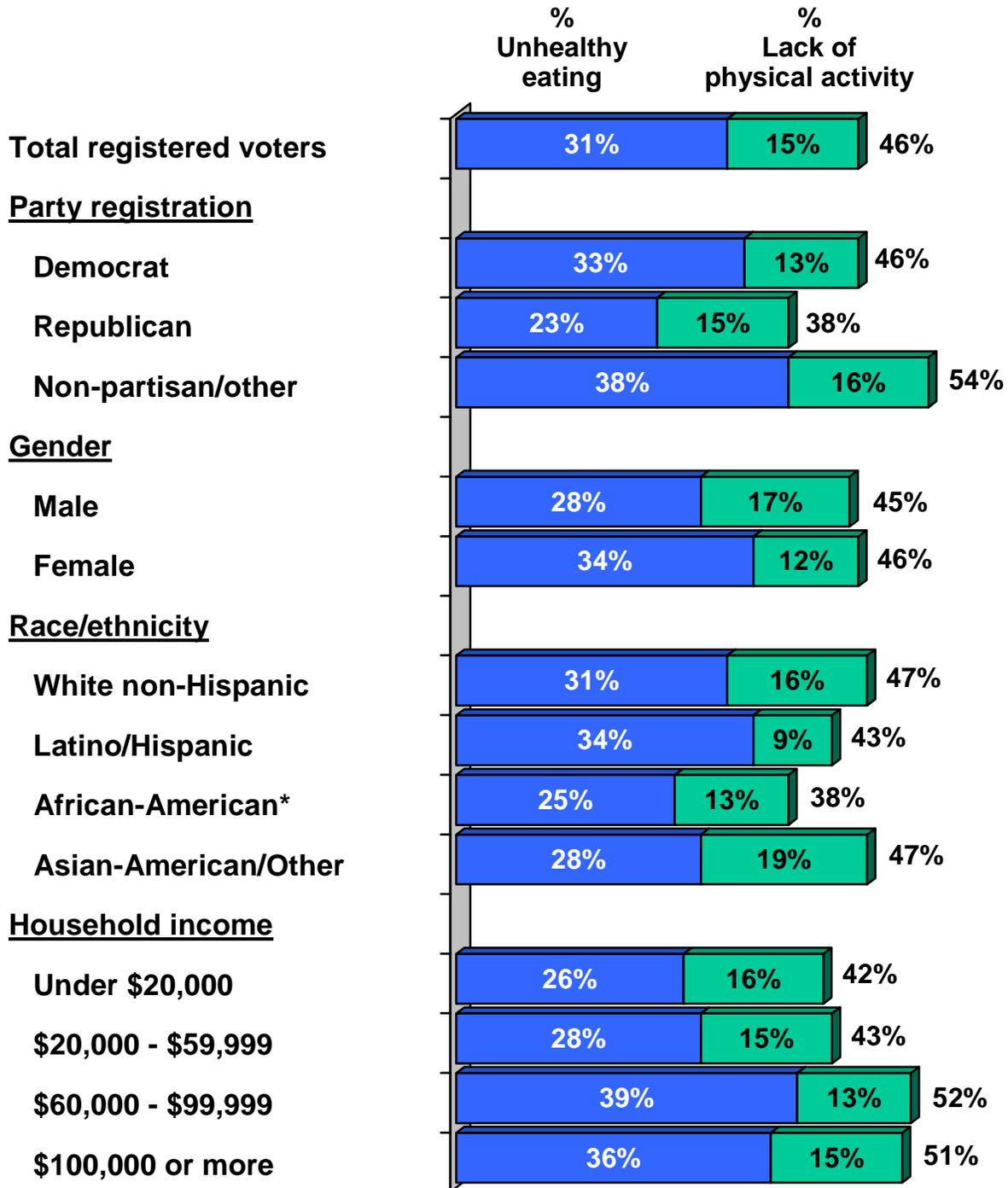
	<u>2010</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2003</u>
Unhealthy eating habits/lack of physical activity (net)	<u>46%</u>	<u>42%</u>	<u>35%</u>
Unhealthy eating habits	31	25	23
Lack of physical activity	15	17	12
Illegal drug use	17	27	27
Violence	13	N/A	N/A
Unsafe sexual behavior	7	10	11
Alcohol abuse	6	10	11
Smoking	4	10	15
Other/no opinion	7	1	1

N/A: Not asked.

Note: 2007 survey conducted among a random sample of 1,002 California adults, while 2003 survey conducted among a random sample of 1,068 California adults.

Table 1b

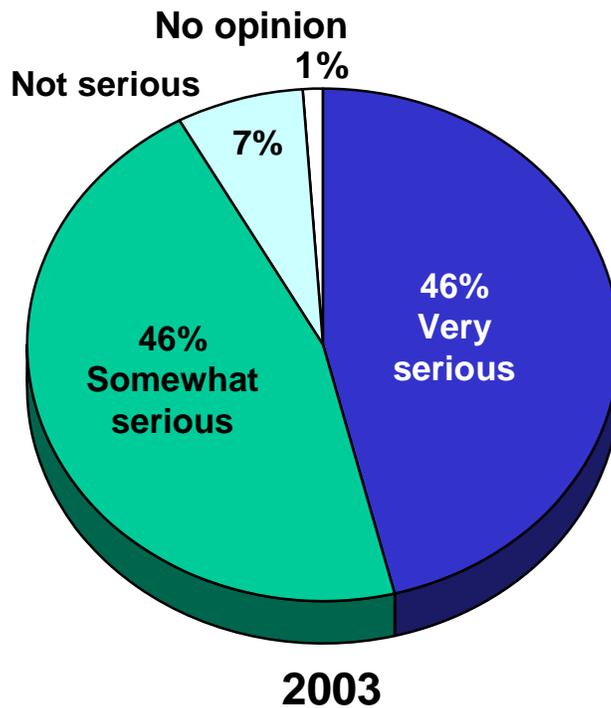
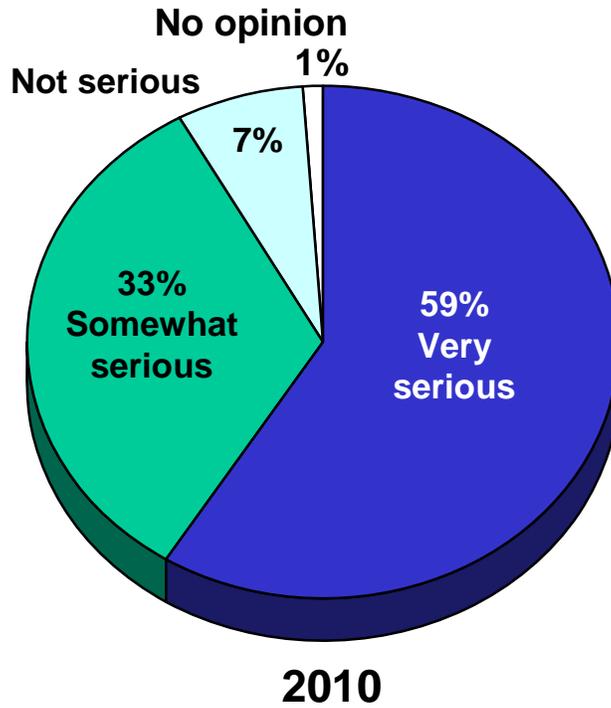
Proportions describing either “unhealthy eating habits” or “lack of physical activity” as kids’ greatest health risk – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 2a

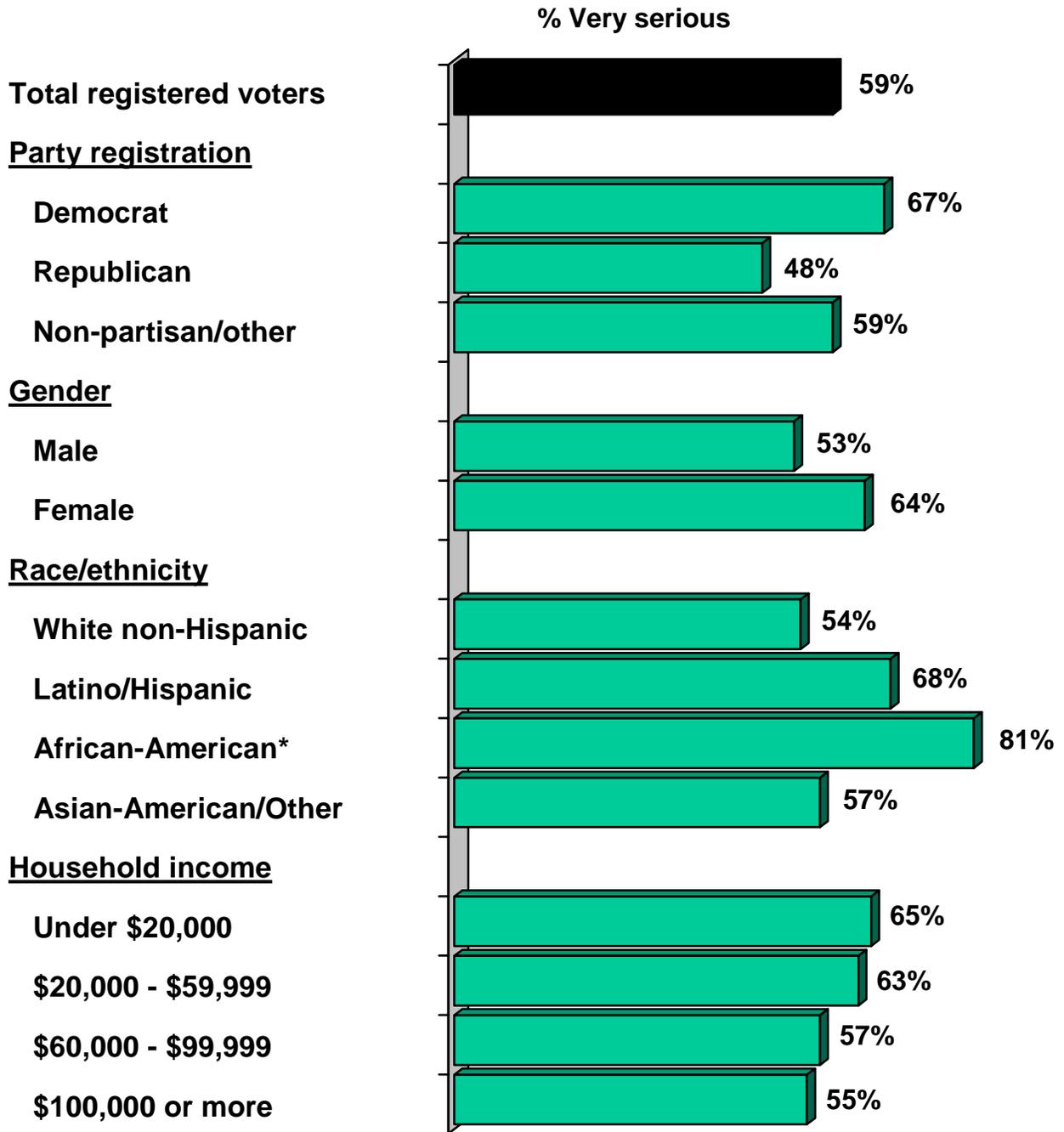
Seriousness of the problem of obesity among California children and teens: 2010 vs. 2003



Note: 2003 survey conducted among a random sample of 1,068 California adults.

Table 2b

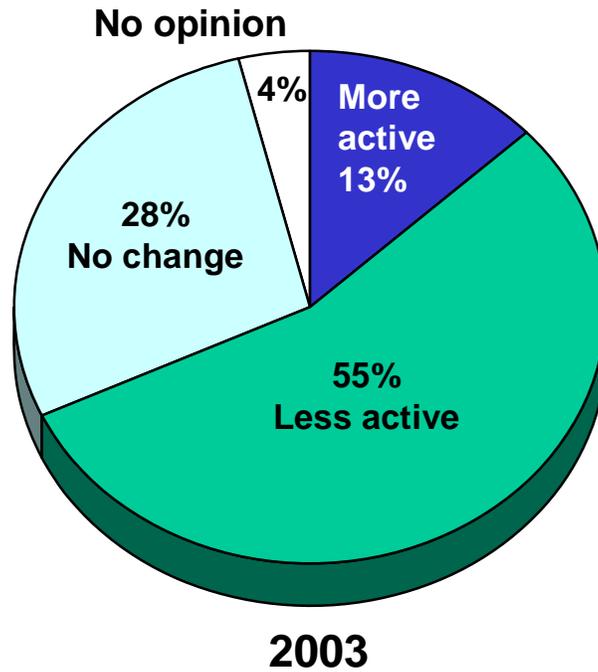
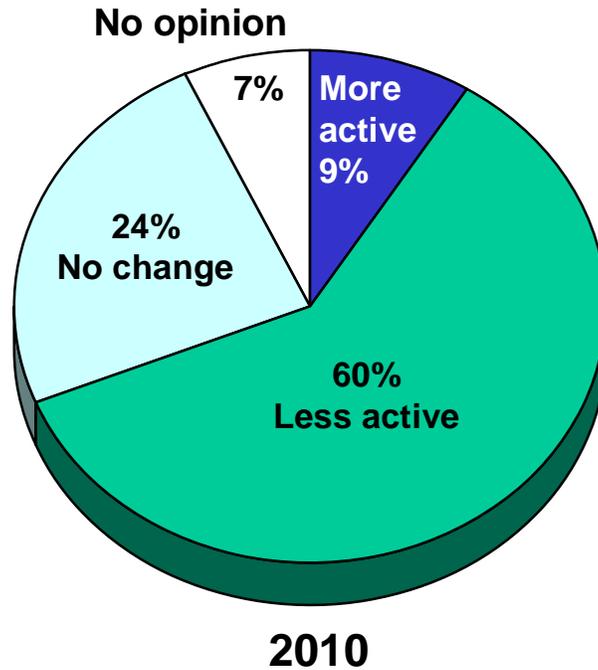
Proportions describing the problem of childhood obesity in California as “very serious” – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 3a

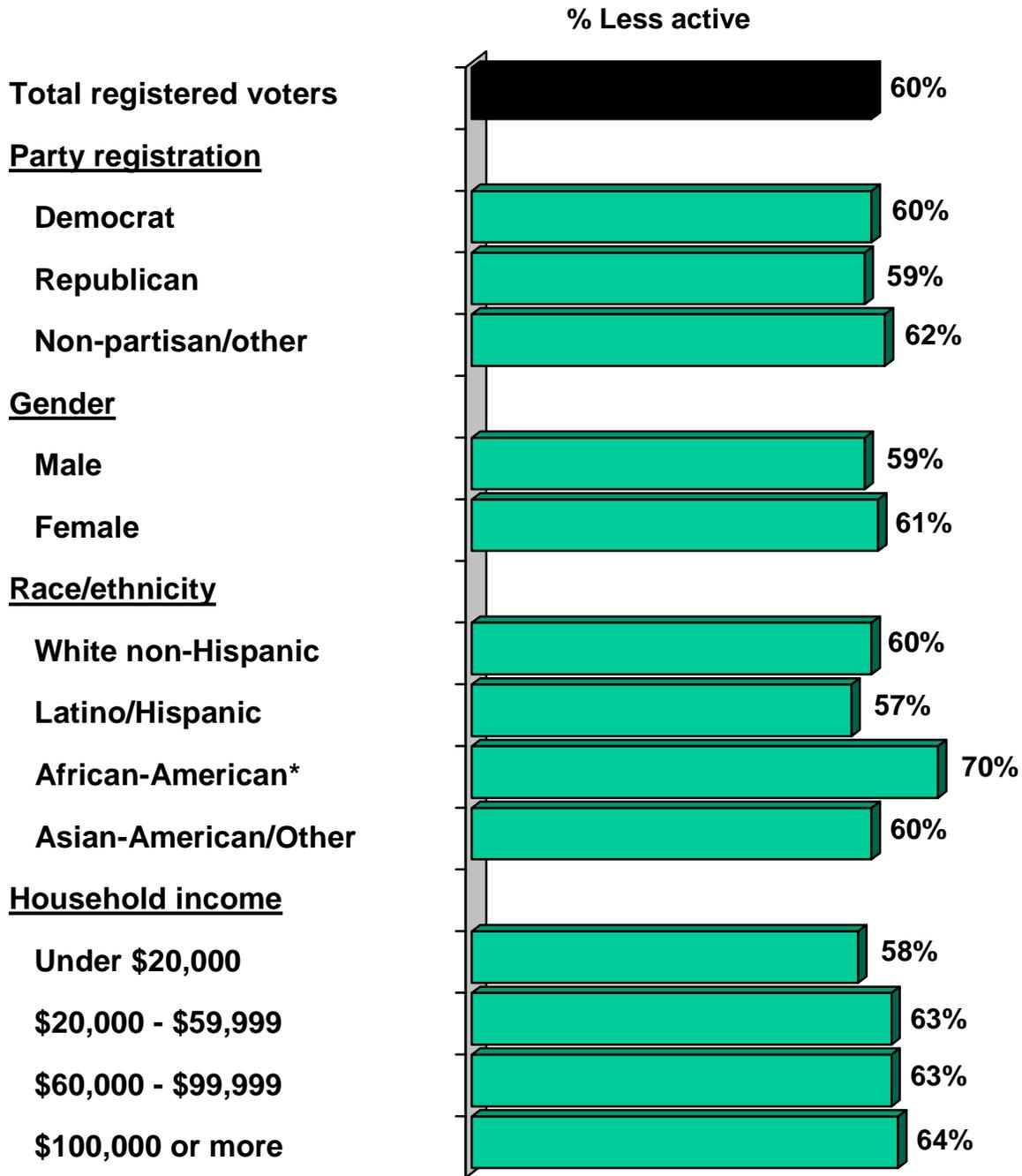
Is the average California kid more or less physically active than five years ago: 2010 vs. 2003



Note: 2003 survey conducted among a random sample of 1,068 California adults.

Table 3b

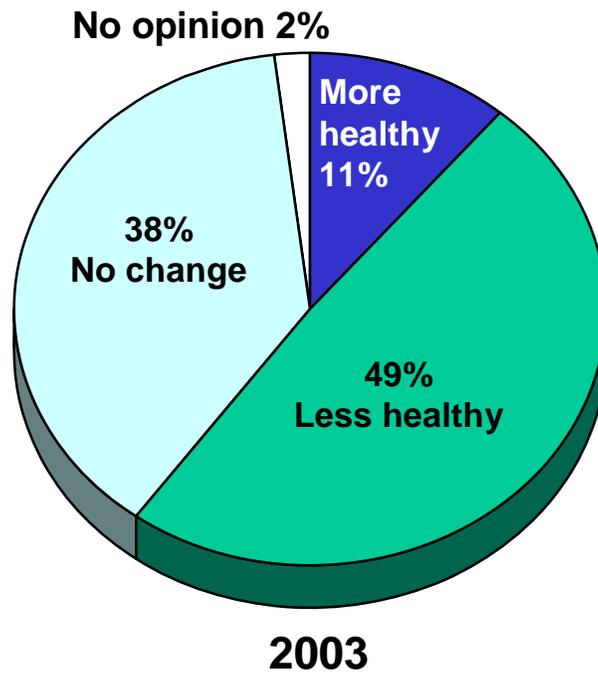
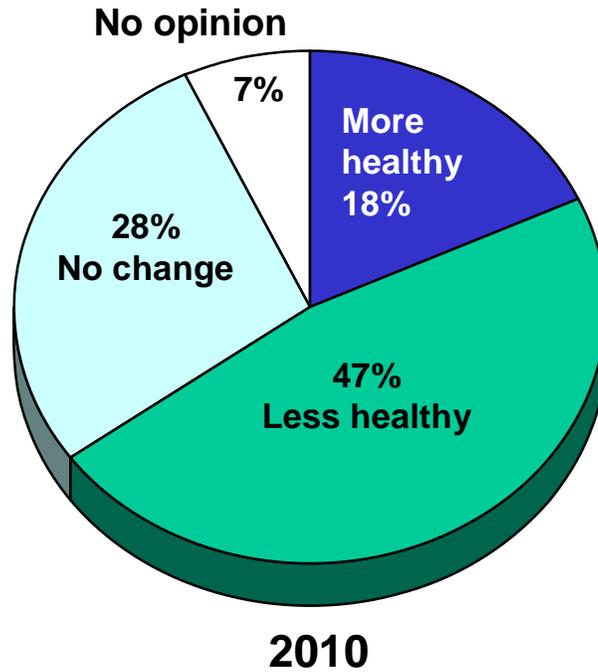
Proportions saying the average California kid is less physically active than five years ago – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 4a

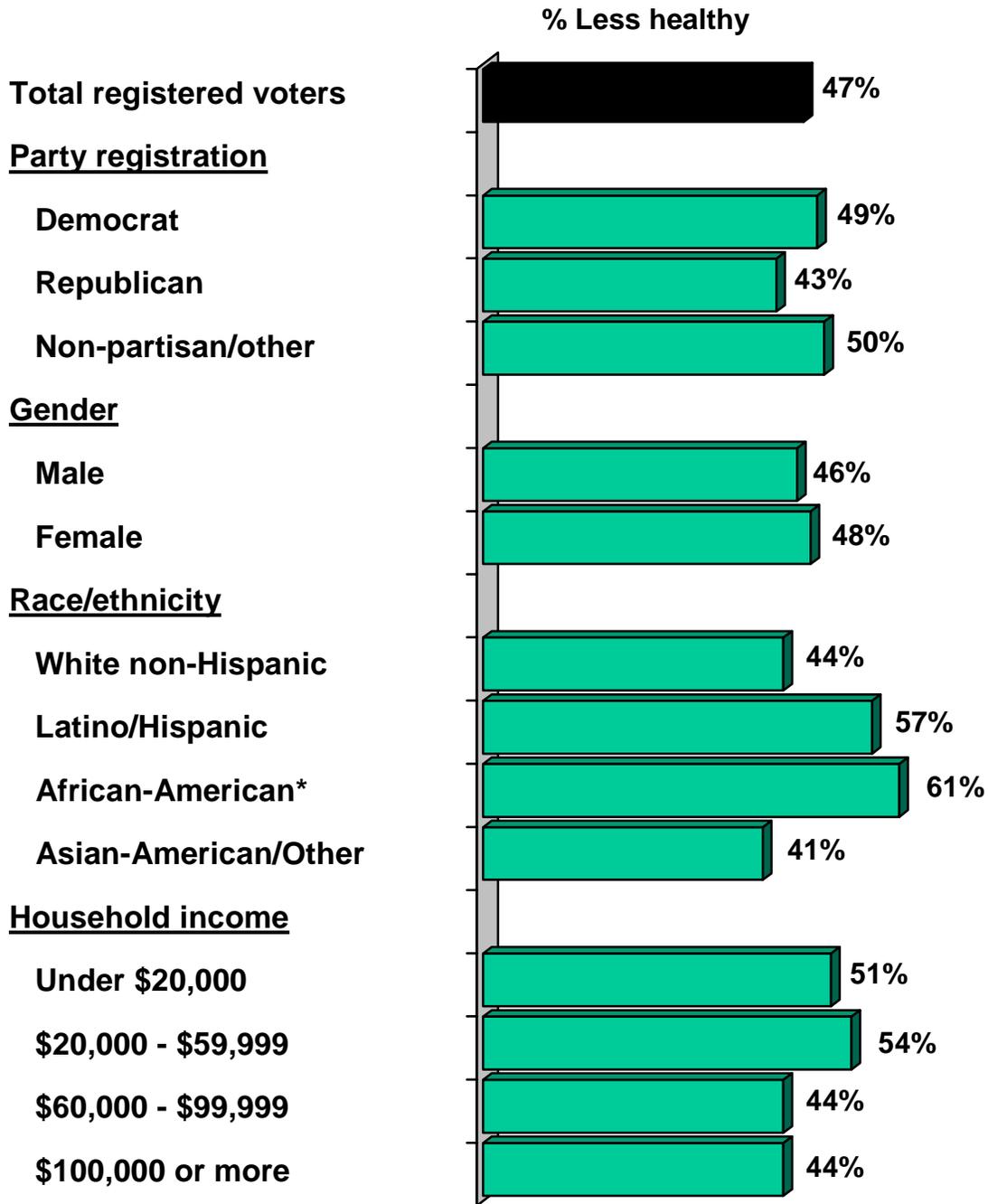
**Are the foods eaten by the average kid in California
more or less healthy than five years ago**



Note: 2003 survey conducted among a random sample of 1,068 California adults.

Table 4b

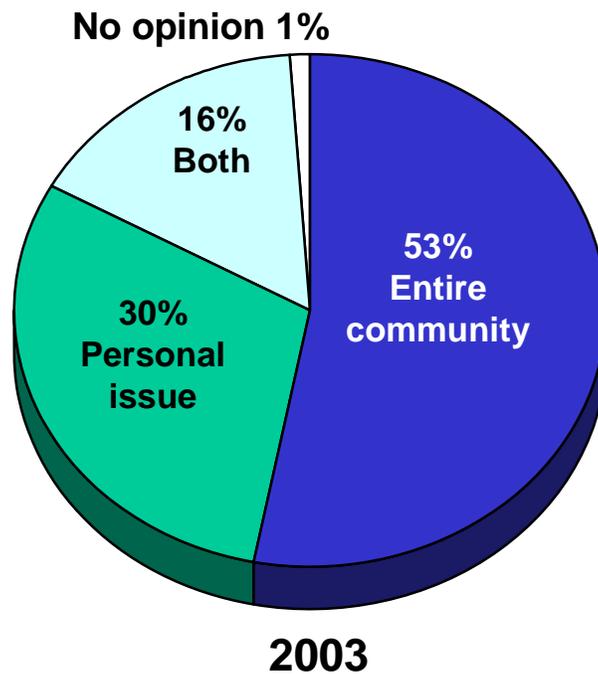
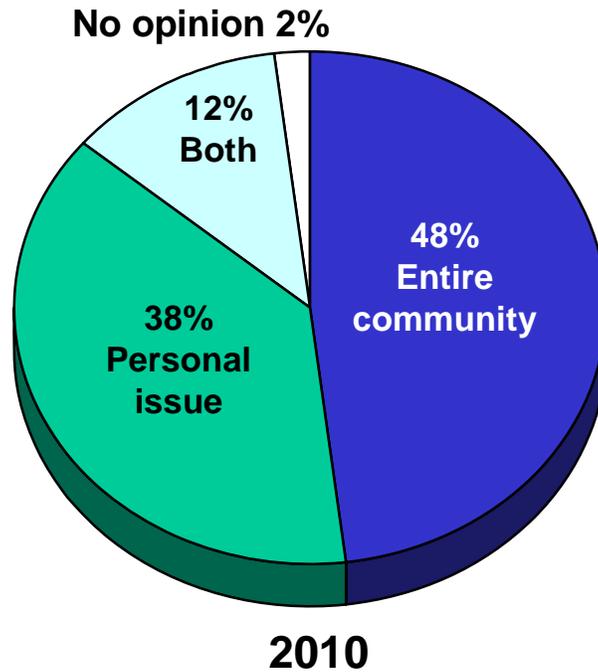
Proportions saying the foods eaten by the average California kid are less healthy than five years ago – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 5a

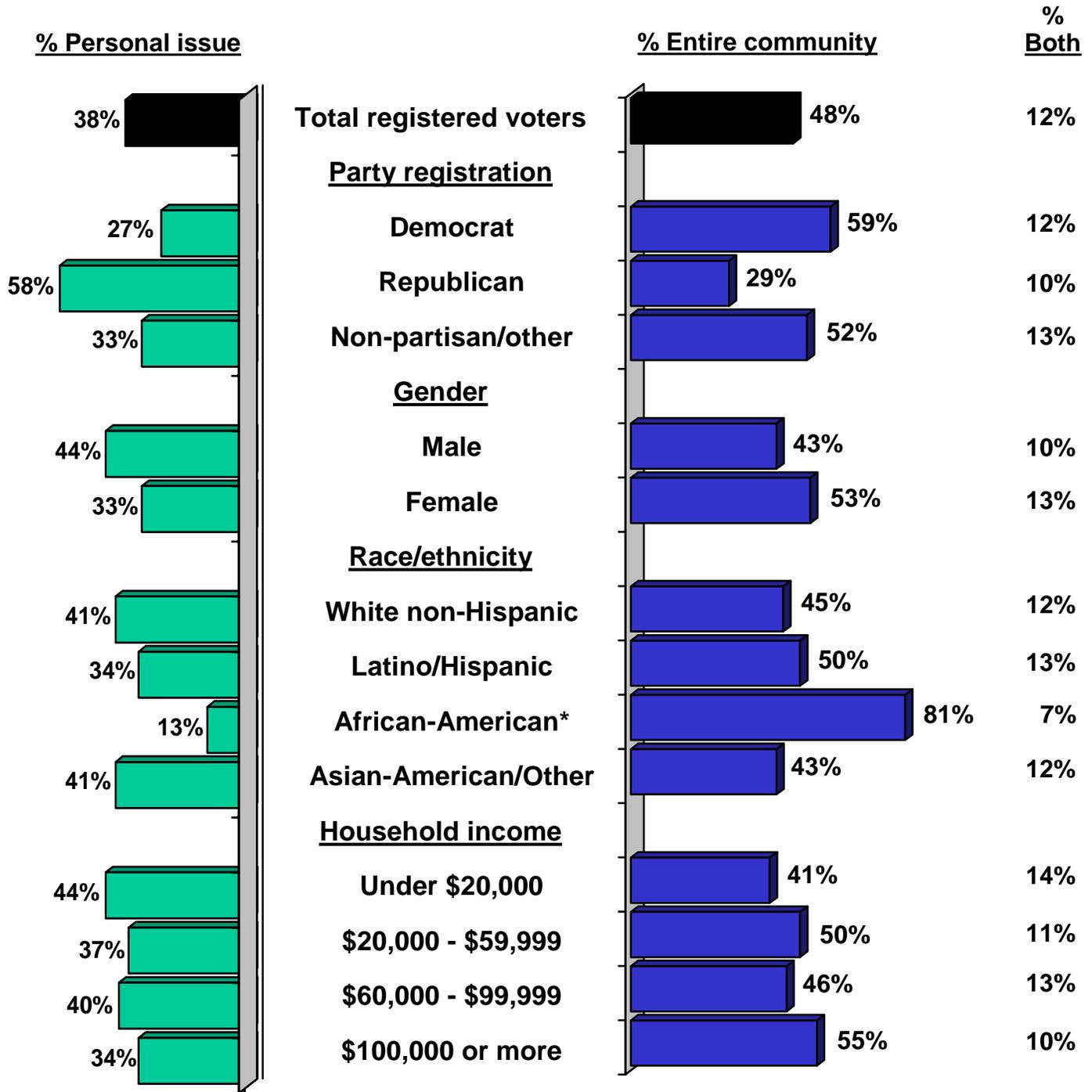
Is childhood obesity a personal issue for kids and their families to deal with on their own, or should it be addressed by the entire community, including medical care providers and community groups?



Note: 2003 survey conducted among a random sample of 1,068 California adults.

Table 5b

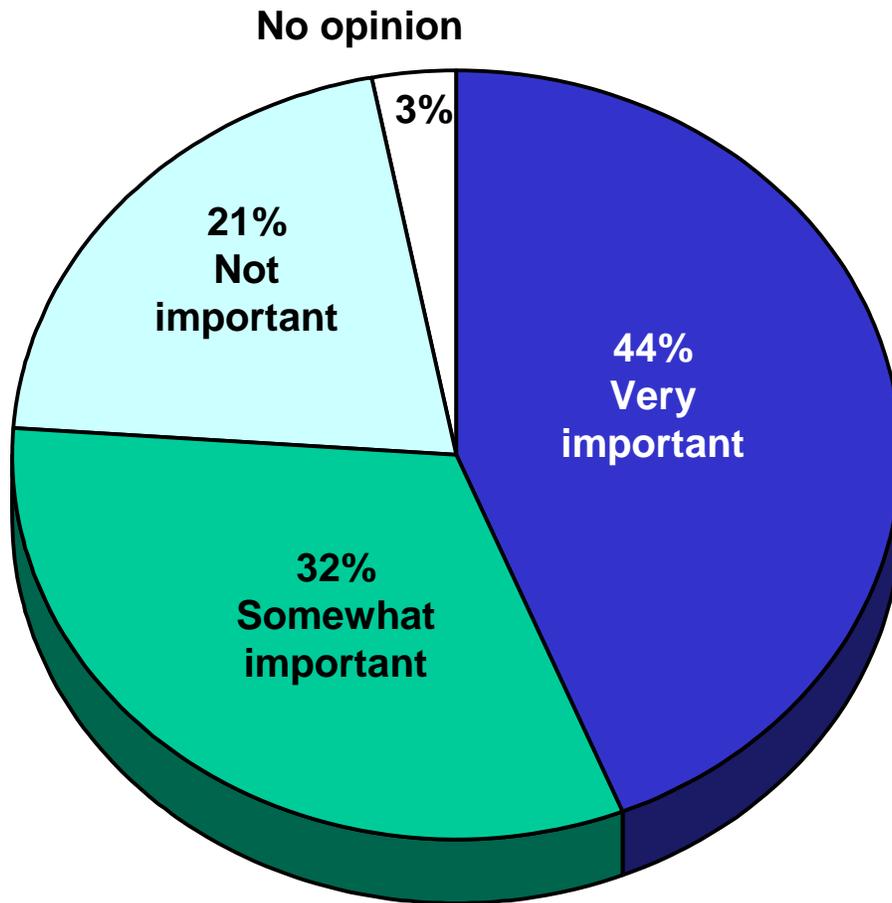
Is childhood obesity a personal issue or one that should be addressed by the entire community – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 6a

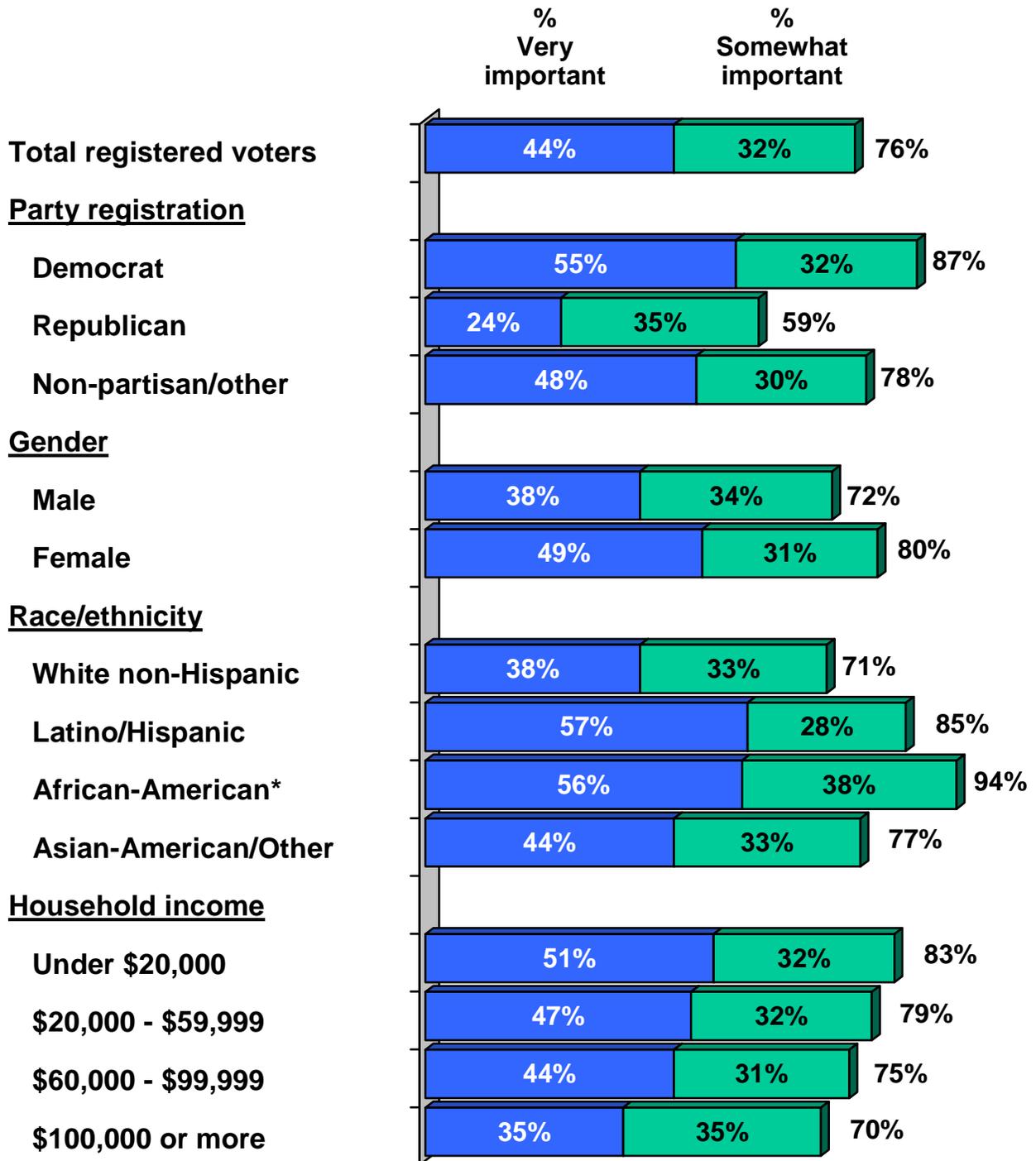
How important is it for businesses and government to make changes to make it easier for people to be healthier (like creating more bike lanes, parks, sidewalks, adding menu labels or limiting the number of fast food restaurants)



Note: Not asked in previous surveys.

Table 6b

Proportions who believe it is important for businesses and government to make it easier for people to be healthy – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 7a

Levels of support for policy proposals that promote healthier eating and obesity prevention

- total registered voters -

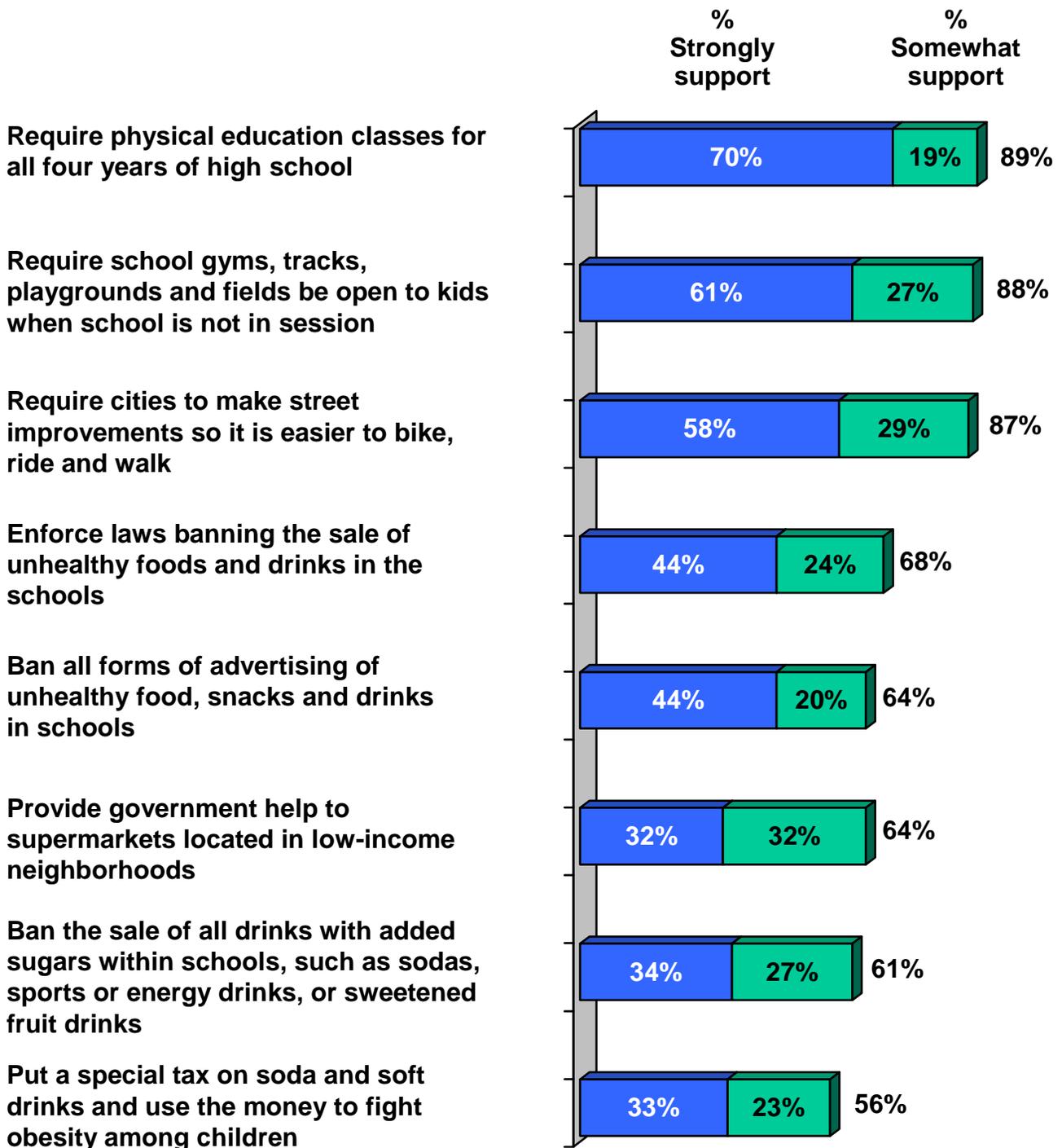


Table 7b

Levels of support for policy proposals that promote healthier eating and obesity prevention

- by party registration -

	<u>Democrats</u>	<u>Republicans</u>	<u>Non-partisan/ other</u>
	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Require physical education classes for all four years of high school	89	89	88
Require school gyms, tracks, playgrounds and fields be open to kids when school is not in session	89	83	93
Require cities to make street improvements so it is easier to bike, ride and walk	91	75	94
Enforce laws banning the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks in the schools	79	50	72
Ban all forms of advertising of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks in schools	73	50	66
Provide government help to supermarkets located in low-income neighborhoods	76	43	70
Ban the sale of all drinks with added sugars within schools, such as sodas, sports or energy drinks, or sweetened fruit drinks	69	47	62
Put a special tax on soda and soft drinks and use the money to fight obesity among children	70	34	59

Table 7c

Levels of support for policy proposals that promote healthier eating and obesity prevention

- by gender -

	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
	%	%
Require physical education classes for all four years of high school	91	87
Require school gyms, tracks, playgrounds and fields be open to kids when school is not in session	87	89
Require cities to make street improvements so it is easier to bike, ride and walk	86	89
Enforce laws banning the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks in the schools	65	71
Ban all forms of advertising of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks in schools	63	66
Provide government help to supermarkets located in low-income neighborhoods	61	67
Ban the sale of all drinks with added sugars within schools, such as sodas, sports or energy drinks, or sweetened fruit drinks	53	67
Put a special tax on soda and soft drinks and use the money to fight obesity among children	55	57

Table 7d

Levels of support for policy proposals that promote healthier eating and obesity prevention

- by race/ethnicity -

	<u>White non-Hisp.</u>	<u>Latino/ Hisp.</u>	<u>Afri- Amer*</u>	<u>Asian- Amer/ other</u>
	%	%	%	%
Require physical education classes for all four years of high school	88	93	84	81
Require school gyms, tracks, playgrounds and fields be open to kids when school is not in session	87	93	83	87
Require cities to make street improvements so it is easier to bike, ride and walk	86	92	95	86
Enforce laws banning the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks in the schools	66	73	74	68
Ban all forms of advertising of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks in schools	62	67	77	68
Provide government help to supermarkets located in low-income neighborhoods	58	78	86	69
Ban the sale of all drinks with added sugars within schools, such as sodas, sports or energy drinks, or sweetened fruit drinks	61	58	70	59
Put a special tax on soda and soft drinks and use the money to fight obesity among children	50	72	70	53

* *Small sample base.*

Table 7e

Levels of support for policy proposals that promote healthier eating and obesity prevention

- by annual household income -

	<u>Less than \$20,000</u>	<u>\$20,000-\$59,999</u>	<u>\$60,000 \$99,999</u>	<u>\$100,000 or more</u>
	%	%	%	%
Require physical education classes for all four years of high school	86	92	85	91
Require school gyms, tracks, playgrounds and fields be open to kids when school is not in session	91	89	87	91
Require cities to make street improvements so it is easier to bike, ride and walk	91	89	87	86
Enforce laws banning the sale of unhealthy foods and drinks in the schools	61	70	72	69
Ban all forms of advertising of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks in schools	57	64	63	68
Provide government help to supermarkets located in low-income neighborhoods	84	69	57	59
Ban the sale of all drinks with added sugars within schools, such as sodas, sports or energy drinks, or sweetened fruit drinks	60	60	61	63
Put a special tax on soda and soft drinks and use the money to fight obesity among children	66	59	47	57

Table 8a

**How easy is it for Californians to find places nearby
that sell fresh fruit and vegetables**

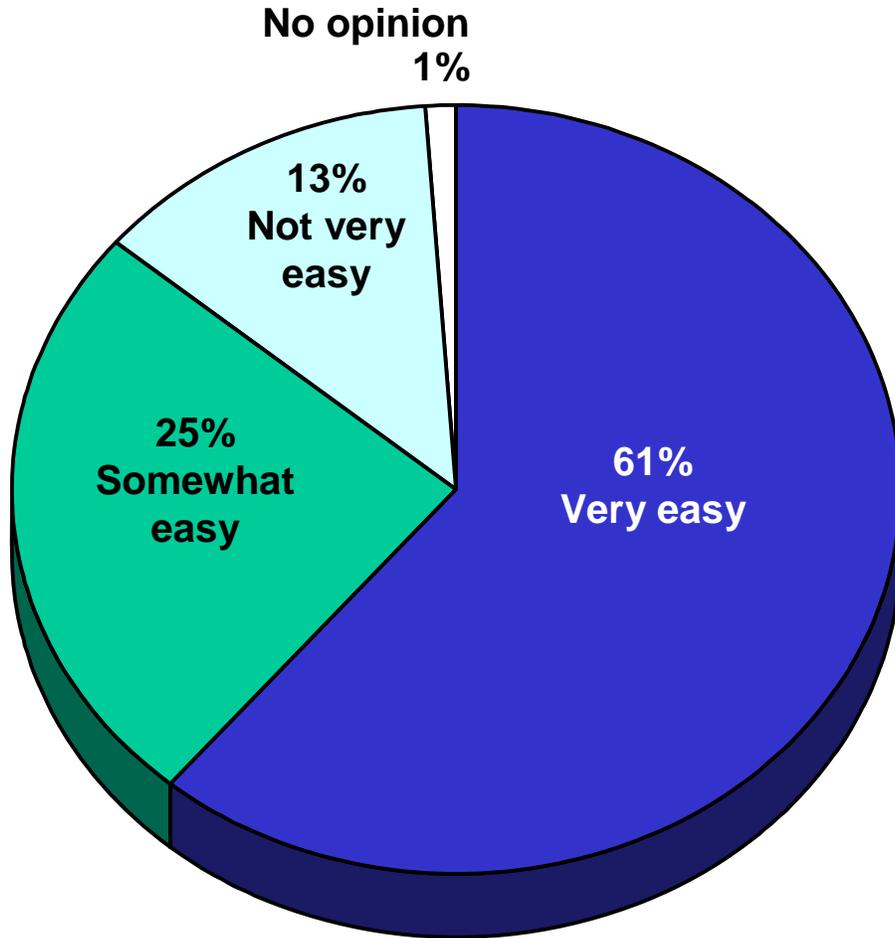
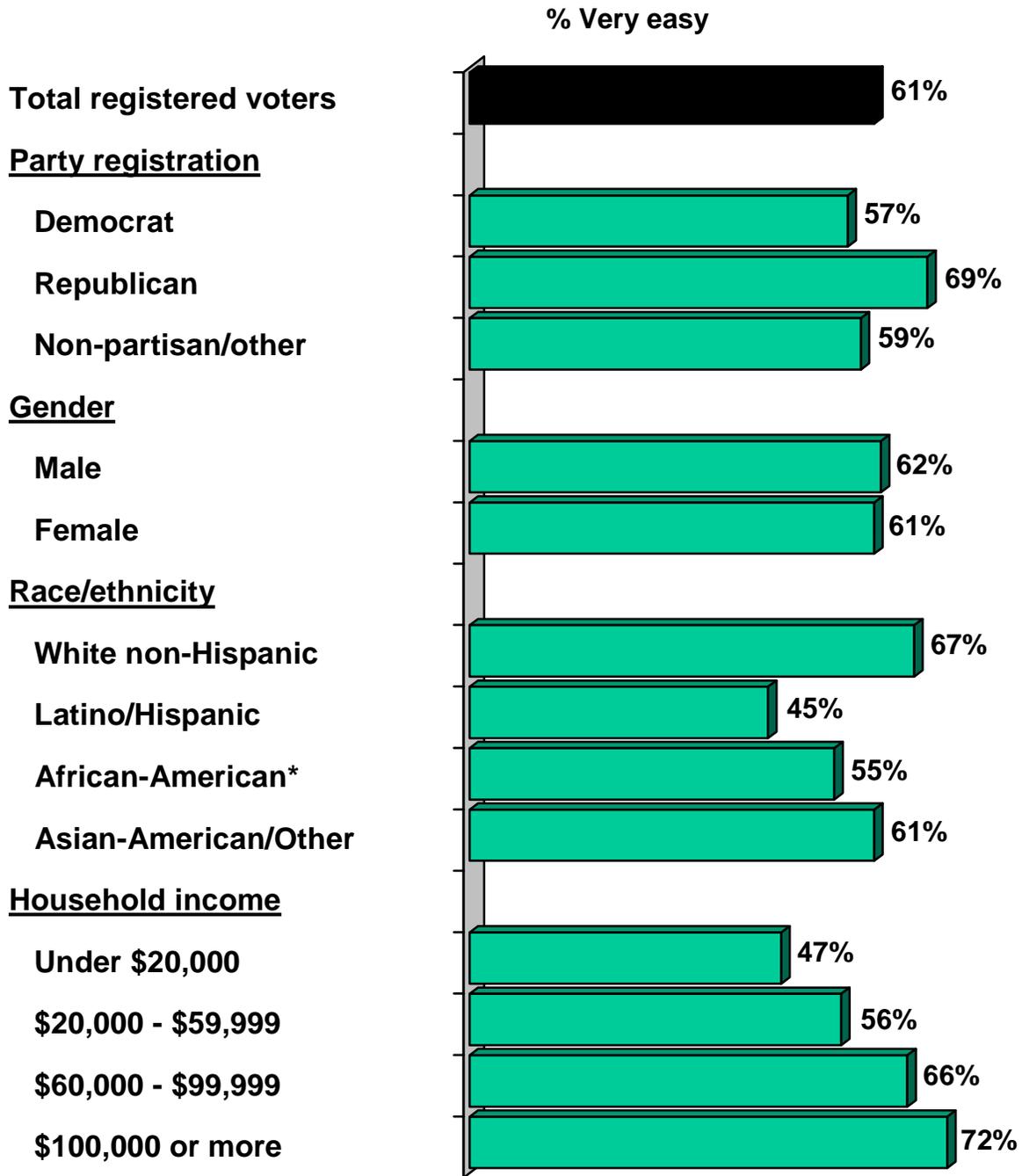


Table 8b

Proportion of Californians who say it is “very easy” for them to find places nearby that sell fresh fruit and vegetables – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 9a

How Californians rate their neighborhoods as a place that helps kids be healthy

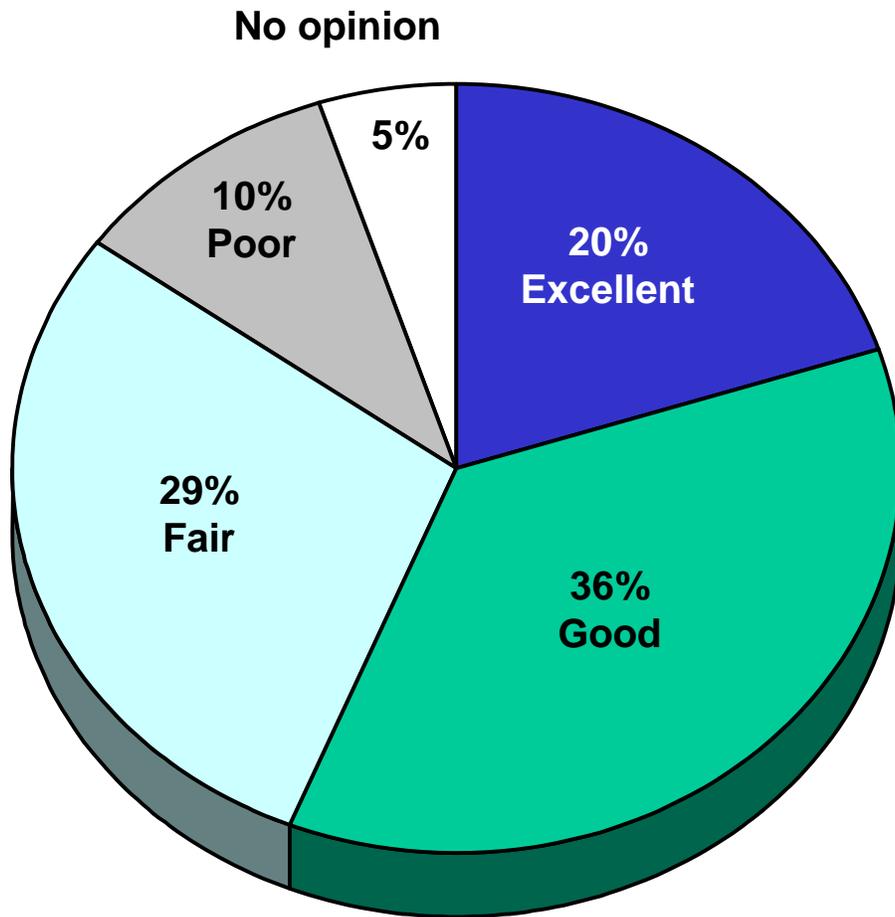
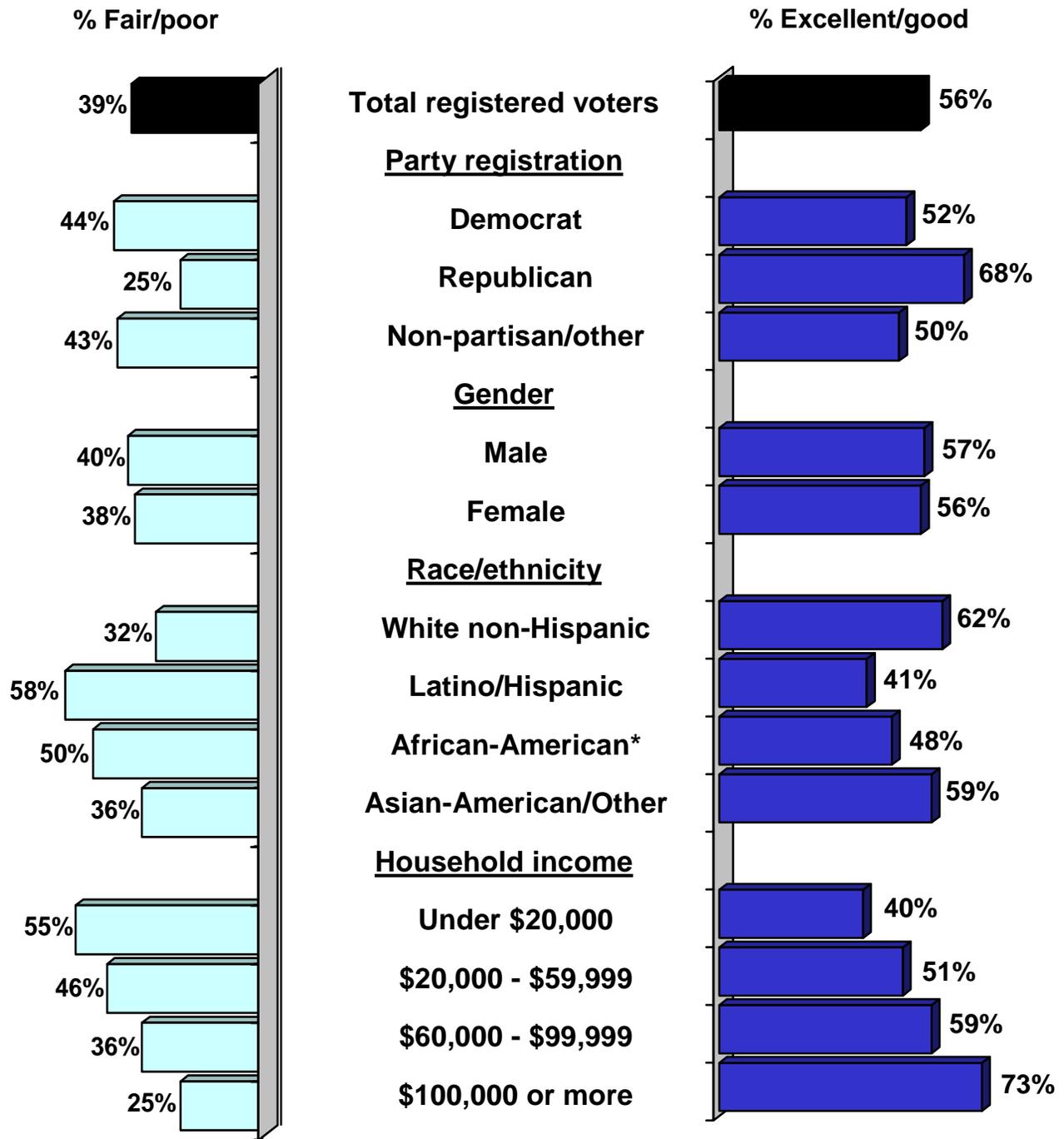


Table 9b

How Californians rate their neighborhood as a place that helps kids be healthy – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 10a

How Californians rate their neighborhoods as a place that helps kids eat healthy compared to five years ago

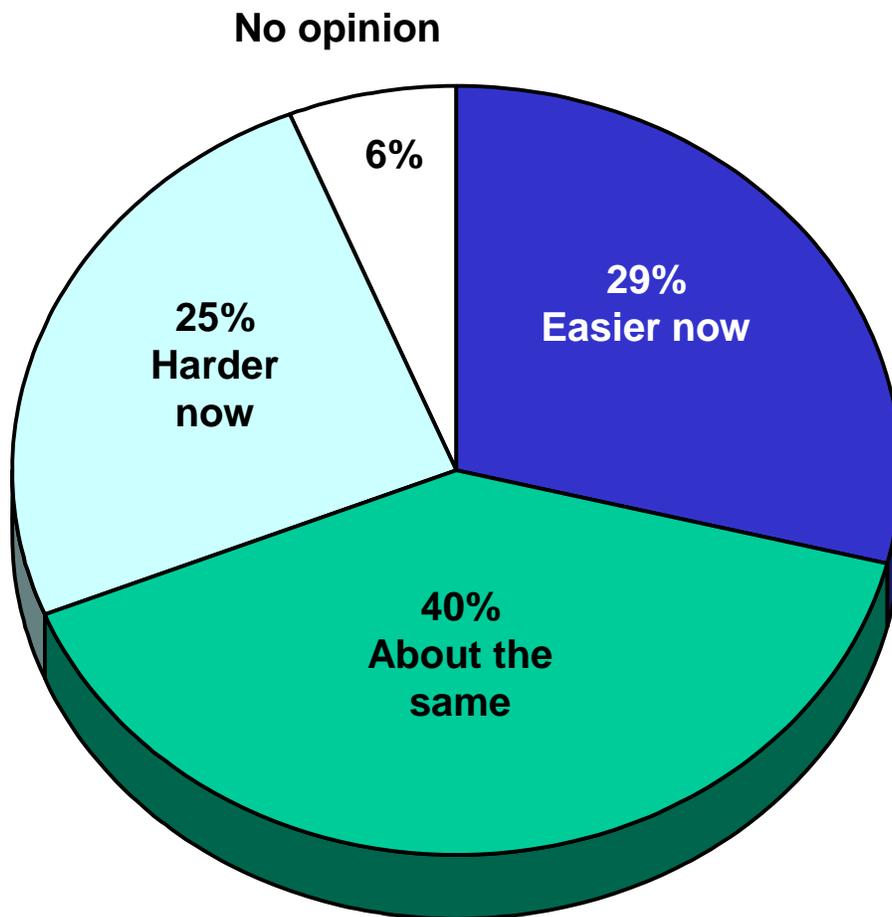
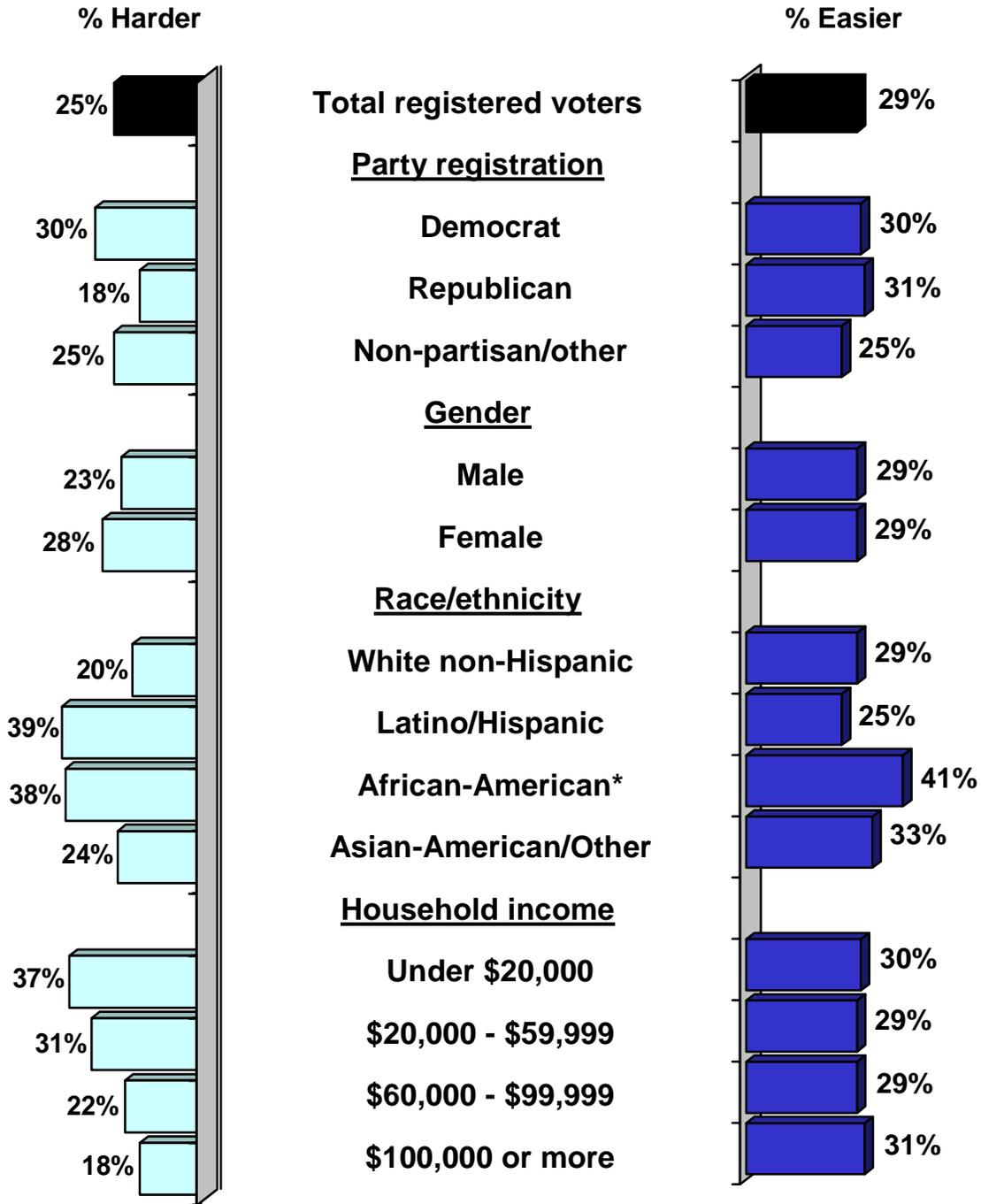


Table 10b

Proportions of Californians rating their neighborhoods as an easier or harder place for kids to eat healthy compared to five years ago – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 11a

How Californians rate their neighborhoods as a place for kids to find safe, clean places to play outside, compared to five years ago

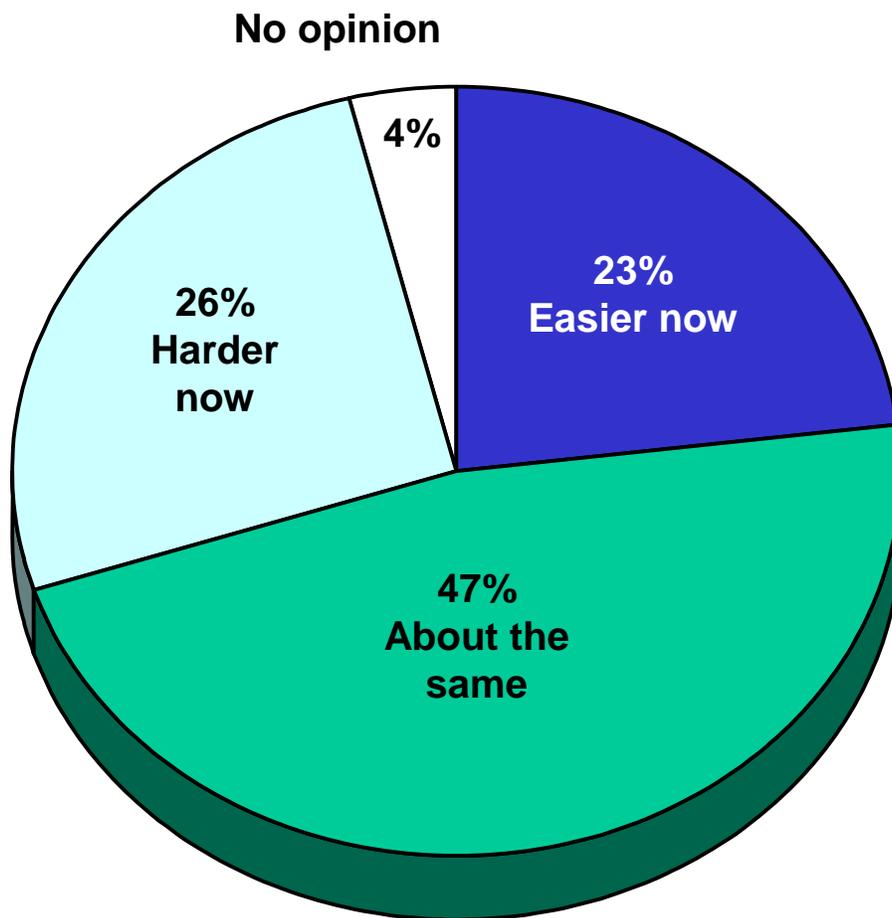
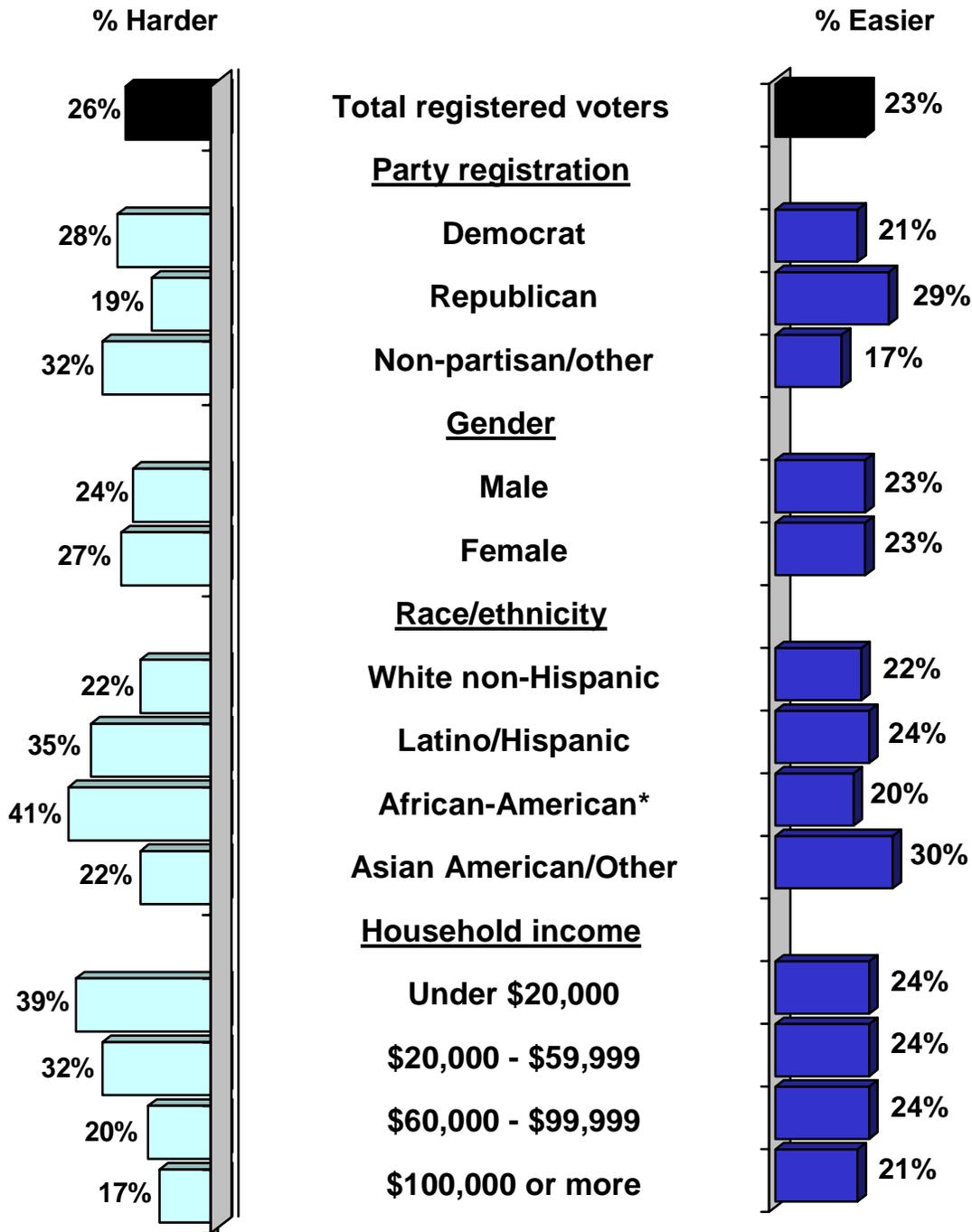


Table 11b

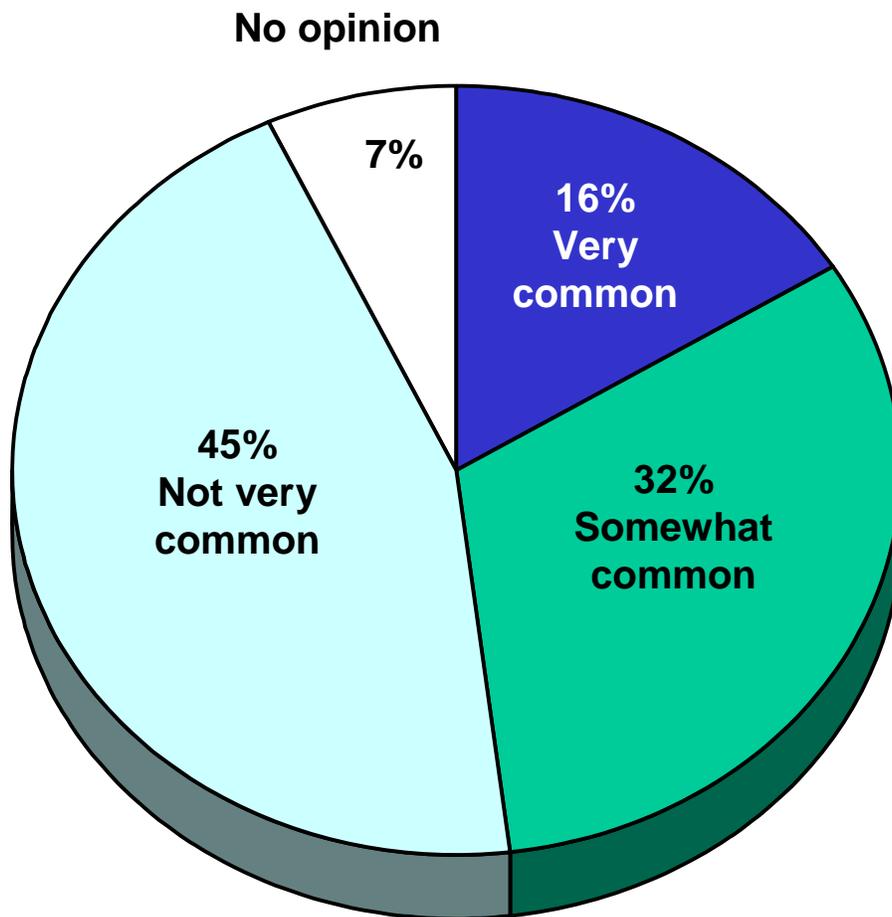
Proportions of Californians rating their neighborhoods as an easier or harder place for kids to find safe, clean places to play outside, compared to five years ago – by subgroup



* Small sample base.

Table 12

How common is it for restaurants in your community to list calories or other nutrition information on their menus



TOP-LINE RESULTS FROM QUESTIONS ASKED

(Findings from the October 2010 Field Poll of California registered voters vs. results from the 2010 survey of California parents in six low-income communities)*

- 1a. I am going to read some health risks to kids in California. Please tell me which one ... in your opinion... poses the greatest health risk to kids in California today. The categories are... **(READ BACK ALL CATEGORIES IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:)** Which of these poses the greatest health risk to kids in California today?
- 1b. **(IF FIRST MENTION GIVEN, ASK:)** Which poses the next greatest health risk to kids? **(READ BACK CATEGORIES IF NECESSARY)**

		FIRST MENTION	
		CA VOTERS STATEWIDE (n = 1,005)	CA PARENTS IN LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES* (N = 820)
()	smoking	4%	5%
()	unhealthy eating habits.....	31	22
()	alcohol abuse	6	4
()	unsafe sexual behaviors.....	7	4
()	illegal drug use	17	33
()	lack of physical activity.....	15	13
()	violence.....	13	12
DO NOT READ	{ SOMETHING ELSE (volunteered)	2	3
	{ NO OPINION	5	5
2.	How serious do you feel the problem of obesity, or being seriously overweight, is among children and teens in California today – very serious, somewhat serious, not too serious or not at all serious?	VERY SERIOUS59% SOMEWHAT SERIOUS.....33 NOT TOO SERIOUS.....6 NOT AT ALL SERIOUS.....1 NO OPINION.....1	N/A
3.	Compared to five years ago, do you think that the average kid in California is eating foods that are more healthy or less healthy than they were five years ago, or has there been no change?	MORE HEALTHY18% LESS HEALTHY.....47 NO CHANGE28 NO OPINION.....7	N/A
4.	Compared to five years ago, do you think the average kid in California is more physically active or less physically active or has there been no change?	MORE ACTIVE9% LESS ACTIVE.....60 NO CHANGE24 NO OPINION.....7	N/A
5.	Some people believe that reducing obesity among children is a personal issue that kids and their families should deal with on their own. Others feel it is an issue that needs to be addressed by the entire community, including medical care providers and community groups. Which is closer to your opinion? (REPEAT ANSWER CATEGORIES AGAIN, IF NECESSARY)?		
	It's a personal issue that kids and their families should deal with	38%	39%
	It's an issue that needs to be addressed by the entire community, including medical care providers and community groups	48	53
	BOTH.....	12	9
	NO OPINION	2	---

N/A: Not asked in the low income community survey.

* The communities included Baldwin Park, South Los Angeles, the San Antonio neighborhood of Oakland, Santa Ana, West Chula Vista and South Shasta County. Interviews conducted by telephone with parents or legal guardians of children 0-18 May-June 2010.

		CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES
6.	How important is it for businesses and government to make changes so that it is easier for people to be healthier... changes like menu labeling, building more parks, sidewalks and bike lanes and limiting the number of fast food restaurants? Would you say, very important, somewhat important, not very important or not important at all?	VERY IMPORTANT44% SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT.....32 NOT VERY IMPORTANT10 NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL.....11 DON'T KNOW /REFUSED.....3	68% 20 6 6 *
Thinking about your own community. . .			
7.	How easy is it to find places nearby that sell fresh fruit and vegetables, like produce stands or farmers' markets – very easy, somewhat easy or not very easy?	VERY EASY61% SOMEWHAT EASY25 NOT VERY EASY.....13 DON'T KNOW /REFUSED.....1	19% 30 52 *
8.	How common is it for restaurants in your neighborhood to list calories or other nutrition information on their menus – very common, somewhat common or not very common?	VERY COMMON.....16% SOMEWHAT COMMON32 NOT VERY COMMON45 DON'T KNOW /REFUSED.....7	9% 25 63 2
9.	Compared to five years ago, do you think it is easier, harder or about the same for kids in your neighborhood to find safe, clean places to play outside?	EASIER23% HARDER26 ABOUT THE SAME47 DON'T KNOW /REFUSED.....4	18% 31 50 1
10.	And do you think it is easier, harder or about the same for kids in your neighborhood to eat healthy today than it was five years ago?	EASIER.....29% HARDER25 ABOUT THE SAME40 DON'T KNOW /REFUSED.....6	30% 23 45 2
11.	Overall, how would you rate your neighborhood as a place that helps <i>kids</i> be healthy? Would you say excellent, good, fair, or poor?	EXCELLENT20% GOOD.....36 FAIR29 POOR10 DON'T KNOW /REFUSED.....5	8% 25 46 20 1

12. I am going to read you some ideas for promoting healthier eating and preventing obesity among young people. For each, please tell me whether you strongly support it, support it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or strongly oppose it. (READ ITEMS IN RANDOM ORDER, ASKING:) Do you support it strongly, support it somewhat, oppose it somewhat, or oppose it strongly?

	<u>SUPPORT</u> <u>STRONGLY</u>	<u>SUPPORT</u> <u>SOMEWHAT</u>	<u>OPPOSE</u> <u>SOMEWHAT</u>	<u>OPPOSE</u> <u>STRONGLY</u>	<u>NO</u> <u>OPIN.</u>
() a. Require physical education classes for all four years of high school					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	70%	19	6	4	1
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	77%	19	3	2	*
() b. Require that school gyms, tracks, playgrounds and fields be open to kids before and after school, on weekends and other times when school is not in session					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	61%	27	6	4	2
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	76%	17	4	2	1
() c. Enforce laws banning the sale of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks within the schools					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	44%	24	15	15	2
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	61%	19	10	10	*
() d. Go beyond current laws and ban the sale of all drinks with added sugars within schools. This include drinks like soda, sports drinks, energy drinks and sweetened fruit drinks					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	34%	27	19	19	1
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	53%	21	12	13	1
() e. Ban all forms of advertising of unhealthy food, snacks and drinks in schools					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	44%	20	16	17	3
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	61%	18	9	10	2
() f. Provide government help to supermarkets that are located in low-income neighborhoods					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	32%	32	12	18	6
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	62%	24	5	6	3
() g. Require cities to make street improvements so that it is easier to bike, ride and walk					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	58%	29	6	5	2
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	80%	16	2	2	*
() h. Put a special tax on the sale of soda and soft drinks and use the money to fight obesity among children					
CA VOTERS STATEWIDE	33%	23	14	28	2
CA PARENTS IN LOW INCOME COMMUNITIES	58%	22	7	12	1